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WELCOMING REMARKS*

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It is a very great pleasure to have the privilege of greeting and welcoming you to the Academy. This is especially so when the conference theme is one so dear to the hearts of those here assembled.

First, I congratulate the Library Committee and the Librarian for organizing this most attractive program. I also express my own appreciation and that of the trustees and the Academy Council for the fine work and many services provided by the staff of the Academy Library under the direction of Mr. Brett Kirkpatrick. In similar vein, we appreciate very much the devotion of the Library Committee in carrying out its supervisory functions.

While some of this statement is a bit off course from what was asked of me, I hope that you will accept my use of this opportunity since there

*Presented as part of a *Symposium on Books and the Physician* held at the New York Academy of Medicine March 13, 1984

are all too few public occasions to express the appreciation that is due.

To comment on the theme of this symposium, *Books and the Physician*, I was led to browse a bit among journals published by our cousins across the sea. I was looking of course for something that might express the affection that physicians have for books.

In the *British Medical Journal* I found a set of short letters collected under the editor's title of *Heavy Tomes and Lighter Reading* (285:1829-31, 1982). The single question posed by the editor to selected physicians was: What books would you select to take with you on a walking or mountain-climbing expedition? In other words, given the limited size of a back-pack and competition for space and weight with other supplies and equipment, what newly published books or old favorites would you try to squeeze in? Several interesting book titles were suggested, but I was more concerned with the whimsical thoughts that come to mind when one is faced with difficult choices.

The primary question had come up in the first instance when an American correspondent confessed that he had been imprudent enough to go on a nine-day hike in Wyoming without any reading material whatsoever in order to save weight in his back-pack. Needless to say, he staggered home with severe withdrawal symptoms.

In the several replies to the primary question, all agreed that books are a necessity and not a luxury, even under the rigorous and potentially dangerous conditions of mountain climbing. Equally obvious was the preference for paperbacks as inexpensive and discardable.

In preparing for such a journey, one is advised to begin assembling paperbacks at least a month before, as first step to the final choice. When loading the back-pack, the largest book should be the most accessible since this will be needed for reading in airports, where late departures seem to be the norm. If one is going to a foreign country, it is essential that at least a little of the language be learned in advance. Most important, one must remember the first phrase to learn in any language is: "My friend will pay." (In this one instance, I will mention a specific book title, namely, *Language Through Pictures*, published by Washington Books, New York. The claim is made that this series will introduce one quickly to several of the European languages.)

One commentator did remind us that books do have more than one purpose. For example, when sleeping in a tent, books, with a bit of padding, can be formed into a pillow to temper the effect of the cold ground and the pillow can be placed under one's heels for insulation. As

you try to fall asleep you may be reminded that you look like a Norman knight lying above his tomb. If this causes amusement, you may easily fall asleep. If not, you may be afraid to fall asleep.

In these short letters that mostly deal with specific titles of books, I was also looking for at least one aphorism and I found one in this statement: "If you choose companions whose books you would like to read you would not go far wrong with friends." (Charles Clarke)

In closing, I have a feeling that this thought has long been a guiding principle for membership in the Academy's Library Committee. And, I suspect, too, that this sentiment may well have been a guiding principle in selecting the speakers who will address us today.